

October 25, 2022

Ms. Allison Krutsinger, Director
Government Affairs and Community Engagement
Department of Children, Youth and Families
Via Email

RE: DCYF Community Engagement Team

Dear Allison,

The Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) is continually evolving, and through each iteration, it has grown in uplifting the voices/values of our communities, early learning providers, children and parents. Membership was expanded through the Fair Start for Kids Act, to be more representative of our state's residents and stakeholder organizations. Our purpose as a council is to *regularly provide input and recommendations to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families so our (DCYF's) strategies and actions are well informed and broadly supported by parents, child care providers, health and safety experts and interested members of the public.*

The Community Engagement (CE) team has made it their mission to hear from regions and communities. They support parent and provider voice and are the primary connection with DCYF leadership staff. *The purpose of the CE Team is to provide oversight and support in working with external stakeholders and advisory bodies to ensure consistent and effective communication between constituents and the agency.* As an advisory council, we rely heavily on the support of the CE Team to not only facilitate and manage the logistics of our members and meetings, but also, to ensure integrity to our processes (i.e. voting, feedback loops and other council business). At a surface level, that may not appear to be a complex undertaking, however, those of us engrained in this work for many years know well that it is complex, stressful, and the forward movement of our council's work is directly correlated to the conscious efforts of the CE Team.

The departure of Deputy Director Deanna Stewart from the CE team was announced during an executive session of ELAC on October 4th and was met with an immediate sense of great loss. Many expressed fear that ELAC's work could be jeopardized by this abrupt change. With Deanna no longer at the helm of CE, ELAC is missing 12 years of historical and institutional knowledge that have been an integral part of our council. Under Deanna's leadership, their expertise in navigating complex policy conversations, while bridging relationships, increased the trust of ELAC members in the neutrality of CE team members.

With the departure of Deanna, and other staff out for various reasons, what are the agency's plans to uphold the vital roles the CE team plays in ensuring the work of ELAC continues without further disruption? Please share the transition plan and what has been, or will be, put in place to support the work of the CE team. Thank you.

Respectfully,

The Early Learning Advisory Council

Cc: Ross Hunter, Secretary
Frank Ordway, Chief of Staff
Tom Dent, Oversight Board Co-chair
Shrounda Seilvanoff, DCYF Oversight Board Co-chair